

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/620,550  
Reply to Office Action dated March 17, 2006

**Remarks:**

Applicant has read and considered the Office Action dated March 17, 2006 and the references cited therein. Claims 3-17 and 20-23 remain pending in the application. Claim 24 has been newly added. Editorial revisions have been made to correct typographical errors and to place the claims into a more proper format. Support for these amendments and the new claim can be found throughout the specification and the figures. No new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 3-17 and 20-24.

**Claim Objections**

Formal objection has been made to claim 15. Applicant respectfully asserts appropriate correction has been made and requests withdrawal of the objection. In particular, the term "the environment" has been changed to "the mounting surface" per the Examiner's request.

**Claim Rejections**

Claims 3-14, 17, and 20-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,518,056 to Voss. Applicant respectfully submits the rejection is overcome.

Claim 17 recites, in part, a rail to be suspended; and at least one safety connection coupled to the rail. The safety connection includes at least a first retaining element and a second retaining element. After the rail is mounted, one of the retaining elements is coupled to the rail and the other of the retaining elements is connected to a mounting surface.

In contrast, Voss discloses a tassel for pull cords. Voss does not disclose or suggest a first retaining element coupled to a rail to be suspended and a second retaining element coupled to a mounting surface. Rather, both elements 12 and 14, which the Office Action analogizes to the first and second retaining elements recited in claim 17, are coupled to pull cords 20, 22. Voss discloses exerting a downward force  $V$  on the elements 12, 14 to adjust the position of the bottommost slat or sill rail of the window covering. See col. 4, lines 27-32. Fixing either of

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these elements to a mounting surface would prevent a user from exerting the force V to adjust the height of a window covering, thereby destroying the basic function of the pull cord.

For at least these reasons, Voss does not anticipate claim 17. Claims 3-14 and 20-23 depend from claim 17 and are allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicant submits the rejection is overcome and respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 3-14, 17, and 20-23.

Claims 15 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Voss. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. Claims 15 and 16 depend from claim 17 and are allowable over Voss for at least the same reasons as discussed above with respect to claim 17. Applicant respectfully asserts the rejection is overcome and requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 15 and 16.

New Claim

New claim 24 depends from claim 17 and is allowable over Voss for at least the same reasons as discussed above with respect to claim 17. Applicant respectfully requests consideration and allowance of claim 24.

A speedy and favorable action on the merits is hereby solicited. If the Examiner feels that a telephone interview may be helpful in this matter, please contact Applicant's representative at (612) 336-4728.



Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.

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